

Nevertheless, John Mitchell, the "business genius, who had built up the English Co-operative Wholesale Society," was unable to perceive this, or to see that "consumers' co-operation, unless tempered by the intervention of the political State through Factory Acts, and by due participation in the management of each enterprise by powerful Trade Unions, might become an effective coadjutor of the existing capitalist employer in the exploitation of the worker"

She however did clearly see that "the existence of strong Trade Unions, enforcing standard rates and the normal working day," was essential, even on the assumption that the Co-operative movement was comprehensively organised The Co-operative movement in fact, like the majority of the contemporary world, was, as she puts it, simply "absent-minded" about the conditions of employment, etc , of their staff They were thus dropping a link of vast importance

She herself had begun to see the importance of Trade Unionism, though not yet in its full significance, nor all its connexions, at the time of her being called, in 1888, to give evidence before the House of Lords Select Committee on Sweating The appointment of this Committee was, of course, a result of the publication of Charles Booth's great Enquiry When she appeared before them, one of the members put a question to her which was, in effect, a request to this remarkable young woman to write the Committee's Report for them —"How would you define the Sweating system?" he asked Her reply

came, pat

"An enquiry into the Sweating system is practically an enquiry into all labour employed in manufacturing which has escaped the regulation of the Factory Acts and Trade Unions "

Had this reply been accepted by the Committee—as it is now, in practice, accepted—machinery for dealing with sweated conditions could have been installed far earlier, and operated far more effectively than is even